

NOT JUST SQUARES

Ahead of a stamp fair this month, Leytonstone, Wanstead & District Philatelic Society member **Gordon George** talks about unexpected stamp shapes, stamps with holes and stamps for kids

Early in the morning of Saturday 18 February, I packed a cheese and pickle sandwich, four cherry tomatoes, a packet of Hula Hoops, an apple (for a balanced diet) and a small bottle of orange squash. I caught the 101 bus to Wanstead Station, then the Tube to Angel, via Bank. I was going to spend the whole day at The Design Centre where STAMPEX was being held. It was the last day of the four-day international postage stamp exhibition, which is held twice a year.

There were over 100 dealers present and, as well as Royal Mail, there were postal authorities from Namibia, Gibraltar, Germany, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man. During the year, national competitions are held and many of the award-winning entries were on display. I am a member of the Great Britain Philatelic Society – as well as a member of the Leytonstone, Wanstead & District Philatelic Society (LWDPS) – and so attended an afternoon meeting held in one of the many mezzanine-floor meeting rooms. The talk was about early British stamps with holes in! These stamps are called 'perfins' and they have different patterns of holes made by various firms to deter their employees from stealing the stamps and selling them. There is a specialist organisation called The GB Perfin Society, which studies these stamps.

The thing I find very encouraging about STAMPEX is the presence of a kids' corner, run by Stamp Active Network, a voluntary group that promotes stamp collecting for young people in the UK. Its patron is the famous ex-Postman Pat, the Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP. As the exhibition was held during schools' half-term, STAMPEX provided a fantastic day out for families. The kids' corner provided various activities with giveaways, competitions and



a stamp auction. This month, I too will be running a kids' corner at the LWDPS stamp fair.

One aspect of stamp collecting I think is fun is collecting different shaped stamps. Most people think of stamps as being only rectangular, but they come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. My favourites are from New Zealand: a tea cup; Botswana: a diamond; Great Britain: Beatles record covers; Canada: a blue jay bird; Tonga: a pineapple; Trinidad and Tobago: a bottle (perhaps rum); and as you would expect from France: a (love) heart! I will be displaying a few pages of these weird and wonderful shaped stamps at the LWDPS fair.

The STAMPEX exhibition guide perhaps best sums up my thoughts on why I am passionate about stamps: "Stamp collecting must surely be the world's most inclusive, enlightening hobby; there's something for everyone."

The Leytonstone, Wanstead & District Philatelic Society stamp fair will take place at Our Lady of Lourdes Church pastoral centre on 8 April from 10am to 4pm (free entry). For more information, call **020 8989 2885** or visit **lwdps.org**